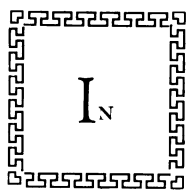


JAMES R. MANLEY, M.D.

A VOICE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS OF AMERICAN
MEDICAL EDUCATION, 1819-1849

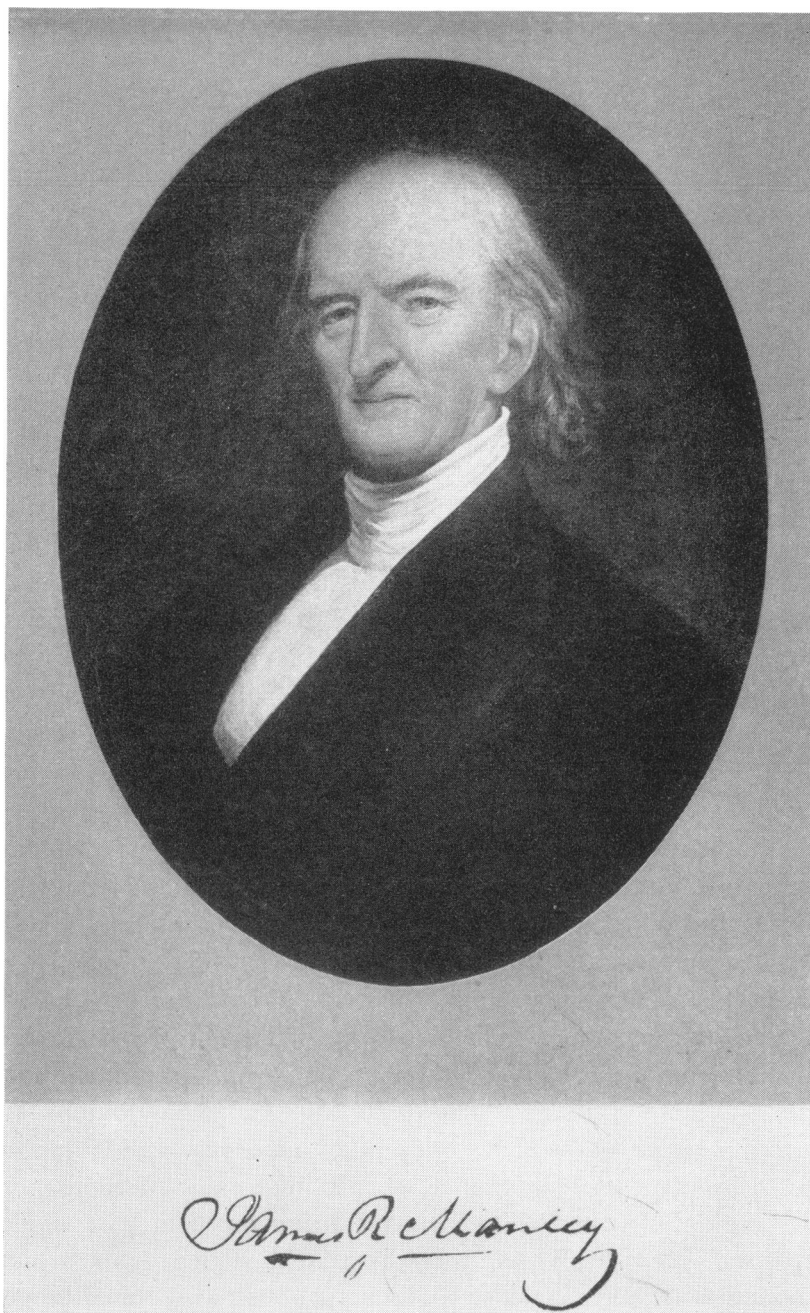
BYRON STOOKEY

Professor Emeritus, Clinical Neurological Surgery, Columbia University
College of Physicians and Surgeons, New York

 IN Manley's inaugural dissertation on yellow fever before the Faculty of Physic, Columbia College in 1803, when he was twenty-one years of age, his fundamental character was portrayed in his introduction addressed to his fellow medical students:¹ "A blind acquiescence in the opinions of men of acknowledged ability, is an evil which has ever been much deprecated by liberal men, and which must continue so to be until a corrective is applied . . . this servile attachment . . . seems to arise, as a very natural consequence, from the manner in which a medical education is acquired . . . medical students are sometimes even taught to distrust the evidence of their own senses, rather than suffer them to give birth to an opinion which would militate against any favourite theory."

Manley entered Columbia College at thirteen years of age. In the death of his adored mother, a year later, he suffered a severe blow. He graduated in 1799, then studied medicine under Dr. R. B. Rodgers, graduating from the Faculty of Physic, Columbia College, at the age of twenty-one in 1803. In an address before the Columbia Alumni Association in 1831 he outlined his concept of an education:² "The great end is to inspire a love for science, of infusing a spirit of enquiry, and a thirst for information." His character is portrayed in his statement, "for myself, I can truly say, that there are but two debts, which I acknowledge my utter inability to discharge; one to my sainted mother . . . and the other to Columbia College: one formed my heart, the other my understanding; one taught me what duty was, the other enabled me to fulfill its obligations."

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JAMES R. MANLEY, 1782-1851

A.B. Columbia College, 1799, M.D. Faculty of Physic, Columbia College, 1803. President of the Medical Society of the State of New York, 1826 and 1827. President of the Medical Society of the County and City of New York, 1836. Lecturer on Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children, College of Physicians and Surgeons, 1839-1840. Annual Orator, The New York Academy of Medicine, 1848. Consulting Physician, Bellevue Hospital, 1847-1851.

(Courtesy of The New York Academy of Medicine.)

Throughout Manley's life he took an active interest in all the affairs of medicine, having served as president of the county and state medical societies of New York, and for many years as censor for the Southern District. In 1823 he was chairman of a committee of the county society on still-birth and recommended a lying-in charity to prevent the ignorant and intemperate interference of midwives. In 1839, upon the death of Edward Delafield, he was appointed Lecturer on Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children on the faculty of the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Manley served as Resident Physician of New York (Health Officer) through the administrations of Governors DeWitt Clinton, Joseph Yates, Enos Throop and William Marcy. At the request of the faculty of the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the New York Medical Society, he gave the eulogy upon the death of Governor DeWitt Clinton.

Manley was a charter member in the formation of The New York Academy of Medicine, December 12, 1846, and took an active part in its affairs. He served as chairman of the Committee on Admission and a number of other committees. His recommendations on what constituted "regularity or irregularity" in the practice of physic and surgery were adopted without a dissenting vote. He proposed changes in the constitution and by-laws, served on a committee of five to prepare and present a devise for a seal for the Academy, and served as chairman of the Committee on Medical Ethics and as a member of the Committee on Public Health and Legal Medicine.

From 1841 to 1851 he was consulting physician at Bellevue Hospital with John W. Francis; and with Valentine Mott and Alexander Stevens as consulting surgeons.

With all of these activities Manley's primary and overwhelming interest in medical education found its first outlet with his appointment, in 1819-1820, to a committee of the Medical Society of the County of New York³ designated to investigate alleged abuses as to fees charged pupils and the failure of the faculty of the College of Physicians and Surgeons to demand of the students the full requisites for the degree of doctor of medicine established by law. During the ensuing six years, while Manley was a member of the Board of Trustees of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, conflicts continuously arose between the faculty and the board which was then composed, in addition to the six faculty members, of physicians practicing in New York City. The

faculty charged, probably not without justice, that "some of the physicians were discontented by reason of the prosperity of men with whom they had been unable to maintain a successful competition; and others were of the opinion that the chairs of the professors might be more conveniently filled by themselves."⁴ We know that Manley⁵ fully expected to be given the chair of obstetrics. Whatever the merits of the disagreements between the faculty and the trustees, in April 1826 the distinguished faculty of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, David Hosack, William MacNeven, Samuel Mitchell, Valentine Mott and John Francis thought it best to "consult their self respect" and resigned, as Wright Post had previously done.

Manley contended that the organization of medical education as it then existed contained within itself serious and great faults which threatened to "degrade and deprave" the medical profession. In his 1826 presidential address before the Medical Society of the State of New York,⁶ he noted the rapid multiplication of medical schools having limited facilities offering courses of doubtful value, dependent upon student fees for their survival, and the fact that these schools vied with one another for students, basing their standard of excellence, not upon the *quality* of the instruction but upon the *number* of students in attendance and the *number* of graduates. They were indifferent alike to the need of preliminary education and the deficient medical training involved in acquiring the medical degree. In New York, a medical diploma, however great a deficiency in medical instruction it might represent, entitled the holder to a license to practice medicine. The abuse of the medical diploma and the wholesale manufacture of physicians, Manley held, could be most readily "corrected either by changing the mode of compensating professors . . . so that the profits of teaching shall not exclusively depend on the number of pupils graduated; or by a positive law, which shall separate the license from the degree, and thereby render it simply a professional distinction: the latter is the corrective, most easy, most effectual, and has become essential."

Manley pointed out that "no attempt was made to render the degrees a license in law, till the year 1814, and then only in this state, and for the avowed purpose of building up and patronizing an institution which had successfully rivalled, and has since destroyed an older school established as a faculty in a college of arts [Columbia]."⁷ The evils of medical education arose primarily from the practice of granting

a diploma which at the same time constituted a license to practice. The union of teaching and licensing in the same hands, Manley held, was wrong in principle and liable to great abuse in practice. To bring about separation of these combined functions became to Manley an overwhelming and imperative duty which continued to the end of his career.

When elected president of the Medical Society of the County of New York in 1836, Manley again called "attention to abuses [of medical education], which if they admit of the application of remedies, call loudly for their exhibition",⁸ and again urged separation of the license to practice from the diploma. Colleges were chartered with power to confer medical honors and the legal right to practice which, as he said, "to this hour exist but on paper; that seals would be granted, and to save labor in the wholesale manufacture of diplomas, signatures lithographed and sold about the country at various prices, like the merchandise of an itinerant peddler."⁹ Manley urged that the student attain more preparation before commencing the study of medicine and that the period of medical instruction be extended. "A mercenary spirit, of all vices in a physician is the most blighting." Manley presented a resolution to divorce the power of licensing from the granting of a diploma to the Medical Society of the State of New York at their annual meeting, February 7, 1839, and his suggestion was accepted by the convention.¹⁰

In his Anniversary Discourse before The New York Academy of Medicine in 1848, Manley again returned to the attack.¹¹ "The preliminary information of the pupil; the conduct of his medical education in some of our colleges; the measure of requirement of the teachers themselves; their anxiety to profit by their situations to which accident, management or the influence of political friends have promoted them; and the known fact that volubility of delivery, a fund of anecdote to amuse, rather than a store of scientific intelligence upon which to draw . . ." did not suffice. "Lecturing itself had become a trade, confessedly such, practiced more for its profits than for any other purpose." ". . . medical schools, which appear, by their own act, to acknowledge no rule but interest." "The evils [in medical education] must be corrected . . . by the adoption of a standard of requirement which will place the diploma beyond the reach of those who would wear its honors without deserving them. . . ."

The New York Academy anniversary address given the previous year by John W. Francis had been warmly received, 1250 copies were ordered printed, 500 to be given to Dr. Francis. By comparison, at the conclusion of Dr. Manley's oration, his remarks so definitely fitted some of his listeners that when the customary motion was made to authorize publication of the address it was moved and seconded to lay the motion on the table, but this was defeated. Dr. Detmold, on the faculty of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, who had voted against publication, then moved that 25 copies be printed, Dr. Rodgers suggested 500, Dr. Pond 750, and Dr. Gardner 1000. Dr. Rodgers' motion, however, carried and 500 copies were ordered.¹² Manley was fully aware of the unpopularity of the subject he had chosen; nevertheless, he held true to the principle he had earlier proclaimed:¹³ "I can not be deterred by any considerations of a personal nature, from performing what, under existing circumstances, is an act of imperative duty."

The crusade so ardently begun in the early 1820's was carried to the first National Medical Convention held in New York, May 5, 1846. Dr. N. S. Davis, delegate from New York, moved that a committee of nine be appointed to bring the subject of medical education before the convention. The committee was instructed to receive and submit proposals on all subjects pertinent to the subject under discussion. On the following day a number of resolutions were presented. The fourth resolution contained the following:¹⁴ "That it is desirable that a uniform and elevated standard of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Medicine, should be adopted by all Medical Schools in the United States, and that a committee of seven be appointed to report at a meeting to be held in Philadelphia on the first Wednesday in May 1847."

Dr. A. S. Bartles from the Medical Society of the County and City of New York introduced a resolution encompassing the long cherished aims of Dr. Manley, his fellow delegate from New York:¹⁴ "Resolved, that the union of the business of *teaching* and *licensing* in the same hands is wrong in principle and liable to great abuse in practice. Instead of conferring the right to license on medical colleges and state and medical societies it should be restricted to one board in each state composed in fair proportion of representatives from its medical colleges and the profession at large, and the pay for whose services as examiners should in no degree depend on the number licensed by them." A motion was then made to lay the resolution on the table, but after some discus-

sion this was withdrawn, and another motion offered to refer the resolution to the committee of the fourth resolution, i.e., the committee on general medical education.

Dr. Manley remarked at length upon the subject of medical education to which Dr. H. W. Baxley from the Washington Medical College, Maryland, replied and Dr. Manley rejoined. After consideration of Dr. Bartles' resolution as amended by Dr. Manley (the amendments proposed by Dr. Manley are not stated), it was ordered that "when the vote on the question is taken it be taken by yeas and nays—the vote, yeas 59, nays 24."¹⁴

The president appointed the following to serve on a separate committee on education to report at the meeting in Philadelphia in 1847 on Dr. Bartles' and Dr. Manley's resolution: Dr. J. McNaughton, Albany Medical College; J. R. Manley and J. W. Francis, Medical Society of New York County and City; Isaac Parrish, Philadelphia Medical Society; Rufus Blakeman, Fairfield, Connecticut State Medical Society; J. Cullen, Richmond, Medical Society of Virginia and Thomas Cock, Trustee of the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City.

At the Philadelphia meeting, May 1, 1847, this committee presented both a minority report, document F,¹⁵ signed by James McNaughton and Thomas Cock, and a majority report, document G,¹⁶ over the signatures of Isaac Parrish, J. R. Manley and John W. Francis; Dr. Thomas Cock, not to be ignored, also signed the minority report. Both reports were ordered printed.

The minority report deemed it inexpedient, at the current session, to introduce any subject likely to mar the harmony of the convention, or to lessen the usefulness of its deliberations. It recommended, among other things, that a mixed board of examiners be appointed; the number of boards granting licenses be limited in each state; each state society should appoint boards to examine and license; colleges should invite a delegation from the State Society to be present at the examinations to relieve the institutions from the imputations to which some colleges seemed, at the time, to be exposed.

The majority report rendered the following resolution:

"Whereas, A general sentiment prevails in the medical profession, that the active competition amongst medical colleges of the Union has a tendency to lower the standard of professional acquirement, and to deprecate the value of the degree;

And whereas, the facility with which charters for medical corporations are obtained from our state governments, exposes the medical profession to the continuance and increase of these abuses, inasmuch as these corporations possess alike the power of granting the license to practice:

Therefore resolved, that, in the opinion of this convention some additional checks to the exercise of this right should be established by the great body of the medical profession."

In answer to these two reports, the Convention voted that they be referred to the committee on medical education with instructions to report at the next annual meeting in 1848.

At the meeting in Baltimore, May 1848, the sixth resolution of the Association¹⁷ recommended to the faculty of each medical school "to conduct the final examination of candidates for the diploma, in presence of some official person or persons, properly qualified to recognize the attainments of the candidate, but who has no pecuniary interest in the institution or in the number of pupils." The committee recognized the cardinal point of Manley's contention, for they concluded, "If the professors' emoluments were fixed salaries, the evil would be struck at the root."¹⁸

The resolution as presented, however, fell short of the separation of diploma and license so close to Manley's heart. He now sought to enlist the support of The New York Academy of Medicine by urging that their delegation to the next annual meeting of the American Medical Association to be held in Boston, May 1849, be instructed to use their influence in support of separation of the license from the diploma. To this end at the February 7, 1849 meeting of The New York Academy of Medicine, Manley read the following preamble and resolution:¹⁹

"Whereas the diplomas issued by medical schools and colleges are simply certificates of acquirement, depending for their character on the character of those who issue them; and

Whereas the multiplication of schools of medicine and the facilities which they afford to the pupils render it not only doubtful but impossible that, in all cases such certificates are of a character to warrant the belief, that those who possess them are poorly qualified for the arduous and responsible duties of the medical profession. Therefore,

Resolved, As the sense of the Academy that the interests of the public and the profession require that the Diplomas should be regarded simply as Academic honors, and in no case as the right to practice physic.

Resolved, That the teaching and licensing powers now exercised by the schools of medicine be separated! and that the powers to license for the practice of

physic and surgery ought to be exercised by separate and distinct boards of examiners who are not interested in teaching.

Resolved, That the American Medical Association be earnestly solicited to bring this subject before the various legislatures of the several states in order to procure the passage of such enactments as shall procure this important result."

Due to the lateness of the hour, the motion was laid on the table and made the special order of the day at the next meeting of the Academy. The preamble and resolution were ordered to be printed in the notice for the subsequent meeting at which only seventy-seven fellows were present, and Manley, therefore, moved that his motion be laid on the table.²⁰ On March 7, 1849 Manley moved²¹ that the Academy now go into a committee of the whole to consider the resolutions offered by him on February 7th. The resolutions were slightly altered but on the whole and in their essentials remained the same and were adopted. The twenty-eight delegates from The New York Academy of Medicine were instructed to present them at the forthcoming meeting of the American Medical Association to be held in Boston, May 1849.

Manley's proposal to separate the degree from the license was presented at this session by Dr. M. L. Taft representing the delegates from The New York Academy of Medicine. It was first moved to lay the Academy resolution on the table. Dr. A. S. Stevens²² moved that the report of the Committee on Education be referred to another committee of three. Dr. A. S. Stevens from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Dr. G. B. Wood, Philadelphia College of Physicians, and Dr. Jonathan Knight, Medical Institution of Yale, were appointed. Dr. Robert Watts, Jr., delegate from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, member of the Academy of Medicine moved that the communication from the Academy of Medicine be referred to this committee. Both Dr. Stevens and Dr. Watts had opposed Manley's resolution. By this maneuver Manley's resolution was killed, for the committee replied that it deemed it inexpedient now for the Association to adopt the resolution presented by The New York Academy of Medicine. In consequence of the report of the Committee on Education, the convention, nevertheless, recommended that a board of medical examiners be established in each of the several states of the Union to examine candidates for license "that both the requirements and the examinations, insofar as practicable, be uniform; and the candidates be familiar with the elementary branches of

knowledge.”²³ These general reforms had all been advanced by Manley from time to time before the Medical Society of the State of New York, yet the essential and all-important reform, so persistently advocated by him, failed of acceptance. This, had it been enacted, would have at once lessened the multiplication of medical schools erected for profit, by abolishing the rather sordid competition for students, with its associated increase in compensation to the professors, and in consequence, would have raised the standard of medical education. “Self-created medical schools . . . spring up whenever the good opinion which a few gentlemen entertain of their own talents shall induce them to assume the office and character of professors,”²⁴ while true in 1816 was still true some sixty years later when President Eliot of Harvard wrote in one of his annual reports: “So long as medical schools are conducted as private ventures for the benefit of a few physicians and surgeons who have united to form a corporation or faculty, the community ought not endow them.”²⁵

Manley's efforts to achieve improvements in medical education continued for a short time, but the grievous loss and his deep sorrow over the death of a devoted unmarried daughter in 1850, and his own failing health finally brought an end, in November 1851, to his gallant battle and stilled his voice crying in the wilderness of American medical education. In James R. Manley, American medicine had a champion of medical education, a crusader against its abuses; a fearless, forgotten force for rectitude; a man indifferent to criticism in performing his duty as he saw it.

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